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Comment : The elimination of the Morse code requirements will foster increase use of the HF band. While Morse code has been a "Gate Keeper" to many amateur radio operators over the years, it is not needed anymore as a requirement. The new digital modes provide low bandwidth modes with excellent accuracy.

I currently Volunteer with the local ARES group, Volunteer Fire Department, Search and Rescue Squad, Hazmat Response team, Confined Space Rescue and the Emergency Planning Committee. The lack of Morse Code skills has prevented me from using amateur radio HF frequencies in any disaster response activities in the USA and areas regulated by the FCC. With my Class 1 license from Europe I can assist with HF communications in any CEPT agreement countries other than the USA.

There are thousands of amateur radio operators with all the HF equipment that could be used for emergency stations in support of Hurricane Katrina response, but they do not have HF transmission privileges because of the lack of the Morse Code skills.

In the current state of emergency, the FCC should eliminate the Morse code requirement. Retain the existing written testing requirements for HF privileges.